Fire at National Chemical Laboratory

459. SHRI KAILASH JOSHI: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether a major fire broke out at Pune's National Chemical Laboratory;

(b) if so, the details thereof together with the cause of fire and the injuries sustained by trapped scientists;

(c) whether any inquiry has been conducted in this regard; if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the steps taken to prevent recurrence of such incidents?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT): (a) to (c) On 12.1.2003, a fire of a minor nature broke out in one of the rooms in the Organic Chemistry Technology Division of National Chemical Laboratory (NCL), Pune. This room was damaged but neither any scientist was trapped in the fire nor any serious injuries were sustained by any person. Director NCL constituted a seven member expert Committee under a senior Scientist of NCL to investigate the cause of fire. The committee observed that the fire was caused due to ignition of accumulated solvent vapour by the sparks generated from electrical short circuiting in the appliances, located in the vicinity of the site of the accident.

(b) NCL has in place all safety and mechanical measures to prevent recurrence of such incidents.

Share of Private Sector in R&D

460. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the amount in terms of GDP invested in R&D by both the Private Sector as well as the Public Sector; and

(b) how Government propose to increase the share of Private Sector in R&D?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT): (a) According to the latest official statistics, the investment in R&D as a percentage of Gross National Product (GNP) by the private sector during 1998-99 was 0.18%. During this period investment of the public sector (including the Government) was 0.63% of which the share of public sector enterprises was 0.04%.

(b) The Government has been encouraging private sector investments in R&D through several fiscal incentives and other support measures such as income tax relief for R&D expenditure, weighted tax deduction for sponsored research, custom duty exemption on goods imported for use in Government funded R&D projects, support in the form of grants for industrial R&D projects, support to R&D projects through sector specific programmes of various scientific and economic Ministries and National Awards for outstanding R&D achievements.

Research for treating snake bites

461. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Indian Scientists have discovered that chicken eggs can become a source of molecules to treat snake bites; and

(b) if so, the details of the research made by the Scientists of Mittal Mallaya Scientific Research Organisation in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. In a study being conducted at the Vittal Mallaya Scientific Research Foundation, Bangalore supported by the Department of Biotechnology, Govt. of India, it has been found that chicken eggs can become a source of anti-venom to treat snake-bites against all four common Indian poisonous snakes, viz., Bungarus caeruleus (Krait), Naja naja (cobra), Echis carinatus (saw-scaled viper) and Vipera russelli (Russell's viper) in isolation as well as in combination. Preliminary results have been encouraging. Currently, standardization of purification methods for large